

III.—BEARD: NERVOUS EXHAUSTION.

A PRACTICAL TREATISE ON NERVOUS EXHAUSTION (NEURASTHENIA), ITS SYMPTOMS, NATURE, SEQUENCES, TREATMENT, by George M. Beard, A. M., M. D. New York: Wm. Wood & Company, 1880. Chicago: W. T. Keener. Pages, 198.

We must confess to a feeling of regret that the esteemed author of this little work should have written it in such haste. It lowers, rather than sustains, his previous reputation. This is, and will be, a source of unfeigned regret to his many friends.

There are various features in the work which we dislike. Among them are the following: It is wanting, in no small degree, in the first place, in a true scientific spirit. Observations are hasty and partial. Analyses of facts, or of what pass for them, are made loosely. Things which should be together, are separated, in view of superficial differences. Things which are radically different, are grouped together, in view of superficial resemblances. Hence, groups are artificial, rather than natural, and are formed in the author's mind, rather than found in the nature of things. Species of disorders and names are produced with wonderful ease and profusion. Many things are brought, as might be expected, in subordination to nervous exhaustion, which have no radical relation to it, such, for example, as those disorders of the *space sense*, which pass under the name of "agoraphobia" (Westphal), "vertige mentale" (Lasegue), etc. The author seems to have lost sight of the more cautious methods of discussion, at least formally adopted in that best of all his productions, his essay on "Trance." This work is in no sense a *scientific* contribution to the important subject of which it treats.

Then again, Dr. Beard makes a serious mistake, from which a little attentive reading would have saved him. He plainly entertains the notion that the disease, if not new, or if not an American disease, has been, at least, discussed for the first time on this side of the Atlantic, and that among American physicians the author of the present work is, taken altogether, its discoverer. His enthusiasm, in view of this condition of things, is of a warm and lively character. But every thoughtful physician knows that "nervous exhaustion" has probably existed from Adam down to this hour. It is not a new disease. Dr. Beard says neurasthenia "is even now but just beginning to find recognition in the literature of nervous diseases." Or again, it "has, indeed, been the Central Africa of medicine." He regards his own articles on the subject (*Boston Med. and Surg. Jour.*, April 29, 1869) and a certain chapter in the work on Medical and Surgical Electricity, by himself and Dr. Rockwell, "as the first systematic treatises on neurasthenia ever published."

The subject is an exceedingly important one ; but it is not new. It is not an *American* disease ; and we are sorry to have to record our judgment that this little book does not greatly advance our knowledge of it. In respect to the pathology of the disease the book is meagre and defective. That part in which the treatment is given is the best of all.

IV.—MÜLLER: SPINAL PARALYSIS.

DIE ACUTE ATROPHISCHE SPINALLAEHMUNG DER ERWACHSENEN, POLIOMYELITIS ANTERIOR ACUTA. Eine klinische Studie. Von Dr. Fr. Müller. Stuttgart, F. Enke, 1880. (*Acute Atrophic Spinal Paralysis of Adults.*)

In this agreeably written monograph the author details four cases of this rare disease under his own observation. From these, and a compilation of the literature, he sketches the natural history of the disease. The interest centering in his own cases depends upon the fact, that they are the only ones on record in which electric examinations were carefully made.

The scanty knowledge upon this subject will justify a somewhat detailed review of Müller's description of the course of the disease. The author recognizes two distinct stages. In the first period the paralysis reaches its greatest intensity and remains unaltered for a variable length of time. The second stage begins with the retrogression of the palsy, which constitutes really the criterion of the disease. The invasion commences always with fever of variable intensity. In those few instances in which no fever is said to have been present, the temperature was not taken at the very beginning. A constant initial symptom is pain of a shooting character, without definite location. It may be the first and for a time the only symptom. Its duration is variable, one to fourteen days being the limits in the cases recorded. A diagnosis is of course not possible until the paralysis sets in. Later on pains of a different character are present. These are dull in nature, but well localized in the muscles. They rarely occur spontaneously, but are produced by pressure or passive motion. Other disturbances of sensibility are manifested in formication in the limbs as forerunner of the paralysis. This probably occurs also in the spinal paralysis of children, who are unable to make precise statements. But deficiency of sensibility, anæsthesia, is altogether absent in the course of this disease.

The disease is characterized by the muscular paralysis, its sudden onset, intensity and extension, as well as its gradual but partial retrogression. The paralysis begins quite suddenly, being complete in some hours, or at the utmost some days. The palsied limbs are completely relaxed, and no contractures appear. The disease produces in the adult mostly diffuse palsy, more